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PRRC emerging trends

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85

4 in 10 Adults in U.S. Attended Church in Typical Week of 1985

PRINCETON, N.J. — Forty percent (or 40%) of adults attended church or synagogue in a typical week in 1985.

Church-going has remained remarkably constant since 1972, after having declined from the high point of 49% recorded in 1958 and 1958.

This question was asked:

Did you attend church or synagogue in the last seven days, not counting weddings and funerals?

TREND SINCE '39

Following is a selected trend since 1939. The figures from 1955 through 1985 were based on surveys in several weeks during each year. The figures since 1985 were based on single annual surveys.

CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE

1985	40%
1984	40
1983	40
1982	41
1981	41
1980	40
1979	40
1978	41
1977	41
1972	40
1969	42
1967	43
1962	46
1958	49*
1957	47
1955	49*
1954	46
1950	39
1940	37**
1939	41

*High points
**Low point

7 IN 10 U.S. ADULTS ARE CHURCH MEMBERS

It is important to bear in mind that the membership figures reported here are *self-identifications*, representing the proportion of people who say they are members of a church or synagogue — and this may include some who are not actually on the rolls of a local church. It should also be noted that adherents of certain churches — for example, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches — are considered members at birth.

Do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?

CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP

1985	71%
1984	68
1983	69
1982	67*
1981	68
1980	69
1979	68
1978	68
1977	70
1976	71
1975	71
1965	73
1952	73
1947	76**
1944	75
1942	75
1940	72
1939	72
1938	73
1937	73

*Low point
**High point

The attendance and membership figures are based on surveys conducted in four selected weeks during 1985 in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation. A total of 5,093 adults, 18 and older, were interviewed in person.

53% Say Homosexuals Are Unsuitable as Clergy

Although Americans consistently have upheld the principle of equal job opportunities for homosexuals, a substantial number would withhold this right from homosexuals seeking employment in certain occupations, including the clergy and elementary school teachers. The latest Gallup Poll, however, found no evidence of increased hostility or condemnation against gays since 1982, before the AIDS epidemic.

In a mid-November survey, 53% say homosexuals should be hired as salespersons, 55% as members of the armed forces and 52% as doctors. Less than a majority (41%) believe homosexuals should be hired as clergy, while 53% hold the opposite opinion. Only 36% say homosexuals should be hired as elementary school teachers and 60% are opposed.

In the case of each of the five occupations tested, the latest positive figures are as high or higher than those recorded in surveys conducted in 1982 and 1977.

Following is the question about which occupations are considered suitable for homosexuals, the national results and the trend:

Do you think homosexuals should be hired for each of the following occupations?

JOBS FOR HOMOSEXUALS

	Should be hired	Should not be hired	No opinion
	%	%	%
Salespersons	71	22	7
The armed forces	55	38	7
Doctors	52	41	7
The clergy	41	53	6
Elementary school teachers	36	60	4

Six in 10 American adults report that the AIDS epidemic has not changed their basic attitudes toward homosexuals. And, although about a third say they now are less favorably disposed toward gays than they were before the disease became widely publicized, other survey evidence suggests that newly formed anti-homosexual attitudes may not be deeply held.

First, the latest Gallup Poll found no decrease since 1982 in the proportion who feel homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal, and only a minor increase in those who disagree.

Second, the survey found no increase since 1982 in job discrimination against homosexuals, as noted earlier.

Third, a recent NEWSWEEK Poll conducted by The Gallup Organization found an increase since 1983 in the view that homosexuals as a group are becoming *more* rather than less accepted in American society.

In the mid-November Gallup Poll, 59% say the AIDS epidemic has made no difference in the way they feel about homosexuals, while 37% report their opinions have changed for the worse. Merely 2% say they now are more sympathetic toward gays and 2% are undecided.

Public opinion on this issue is conditioned by age, education and income, with persons 65 and older, those whose formal education ended before graduation from high school, and those in the lower-income brackets more likely to say their attitudes toward homosexuals have worsened because of the AIDS epidemic.

In the Gallup Poll's first (1977) sounding of public opinion, equal proportions said homosexual relations between consenting adults should and should not be legal. In 1982, a 45% plurality favored legalization while 39% were opposed. The current survey found no significant decline in those favoring legalization, a slight upturn in opposition and a concomitant decline in the undecided vote.

Following is the question asked and the trend:

Do you think homosexual relations between consenting adults should or should not be legal?

	Should be legal	Should not be legal	No opinion
	%	%	%
Nov. 11-18	44	47	9
1982	45	39	16
1977	43	43	14

One question was also asked:

Would you say the AIDS epidemic has changed your opinion about homosexuals for the better, for the worse, or has it had no effect on the way you feel?

The results:

Changed for better	2%
Changed for worse	37
Hasn't changed	59
No opinion	2
	100%

The latest results are based on telephone interviews with 1,008 adults, 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected locations across the nation during the period Nov. 11-18.

One in Four Adults in U.S. Now Involved in Bible Study

Here are the proportions currently involved in each of the activities studied by key population groups:

BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

NATIONAL	26%
Evangelicals	63
Non-evangelicals	18
Men	23
Women	29
18-29 years	23
30-43 years	28
50 & older	26
Whites	24
Blacks	43
Hispanics	18
College graduates	26
College incomplete	27
High school graduates	22
Less than H.S. graduates	32
Protestants	35
Catholics	15

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

NATIONAL	21%
Evangelicals	39
Non-evangelicals	17
Men	19
Women	23
18-29 years	22
30-49 years	18
50 & older	23
Whites	20
Blacks	27
Hispanics	20
College graduates	23
College incomplete	25
High school graduates	15
Less than H.S. graduates	25
Protestants	24
Catholics	17

PRAYER AND MEDITATION GROUPS

NATIONAL	18%
Evangelicals	43
Non-evangelicals	13
Men	15
Women	21
18-29 years	15
30-49 years	20
50 & older	22
Whites	17
Blacks	33
Hispanics	7
College graduates	24
College incomplete	18
High school graduates	14
Less than H.S. graduates	21
Protestants	24
Catholics	10

MISSIONARY WORK

NATIONAL	10%
Evangelicals	26
Non-evangelicals	7
Men	8
Women	12
18-29 years	6
30-49 years	10
50 & older	13
Whites	8
Blacks	25
Hispanics	9
College graduates	9
College incomplete	10
High school graduates	7
Less than H.S. graduates	17
Protestants	14
Catholics	3

WITNESSING

NATIONAL	14%
Evangelicals	38
Non-evangelicals	7
Men	13
Women	16
18-29 years	8
30-49 years	17
50 & older	16
Whites	13
Blacks	22
Hispanics	10
College graduates	14
College incomplete	13
High school graduates	12
Less than H.S. graduates	20
Protestants	21
Catholics	6

EVANGELISM

NATIONAL	9%
Evangelicals	28
Non-evangelicals	5
Men	7
Women	10
18-29 years	5
30-49 years	13
50 & older	7
Whites	8
Blacks	9
Hispanics	8
College graduates	9
College incomplete	9
High school graduates	9
Less than H.S. graduates	8
Protestants	12
Catholics	3

HEALING

NATIONAL	6%
Evangelicals	18
Non-evangelicals	4
Men	5
Women	7
18–29 years	6
30–49 years	7
50 & older	5
Whites	5
Blacks	13
Hispanics	5
College graduates	6
College incomplete	7
High school graduates	5
Less than H.S. graduates	5
Protestants	9
Catholics	3

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

NATIONAL	3%
Evangelicals	11
Non-evangelicals	2
Men	3
Women	3
18–29 years	3
30–49 years	5
50 & older	2
Whites	3
Blacks	9
Hispanics	5
College graduates	4
College incomplete	2
High school graduates	4
Less than H.S. graduates	4
Protestants	6
Catholics	1

PROPHECY

NATIONAL	4%
Evangelicals	13
Non-evangelicals	2
Men	4
Women	4
18–29 years	3
30–49 years	5
50 & older	4
Whites	3
Blacks	7
Hispanics	8
College graduates	4
College incomplete	5
High school graduates	3
Less than H.S. graduates	6
Protestants	5
Catholics	1

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

NATIONAL	3%
Evangelicals	8
Non-evangelicals	2
Men	3
Women	3
18–29 years	2
30–49 years	4
50 & older	3
Whites	3
Blacks	1
Hispanics	10
College graduates	4
College incomplete	3
High school graduates	2
Less than H.S. graduates	3
Protestants	3
Catholics	3

Interviewing for this study was conducted by telephone during the period April 8–16. A total of 1,104 interviews were completed with a national sample of adults 18 years of age and older.

Evangelicals in the survey met 3 criteria: (1) believe the Bible is the actual word of God; (2) have had a born again experience; and (3) have tried to encourage someone to accept Jesus Christ as his or her Saviour.

It is important to bear in mind that evangelicals comprised 17% of the sample; the remaining 83% were considered non-evangelicals.

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